

The Pickup Express

News and Ideas for Adopt-a-Highway Volunteers



Spring 2003

Commissioner's Column



Boy, are we glad spring is here. With this year's record-breaking winter weather, and subsequent pothole develop-

ment, VDOT has been forced to spend twice as much as usual on maintenance. Therefore, the work that you do in keeping Virginia beautiful is more important than ever. Adopt-a-Highway volunteers clean more than 13,000 miles of highways – about one-quarter of Virginia's state-maintained roads – and provide the equivalent of roughly \$2 million annually in litter-control services to the state. We simply could not keep our roadways clean without you. So I want to say thank you!

You may be wondering why we are continuing to print the Pick-Up Express publication during this time of statewide budget cuts. It is because you are a very valuable resource for us, and keeping you informed and letting you know that you are appreciated is the least we can do. In this issue, you will find safety tips to follow while cleaning up the highways. Please heed these suggestions. Stay safe, and thank you again for all you do to Keep Virginia Moving.

Philip Shucet

Philip A. Shucet
Commissioner

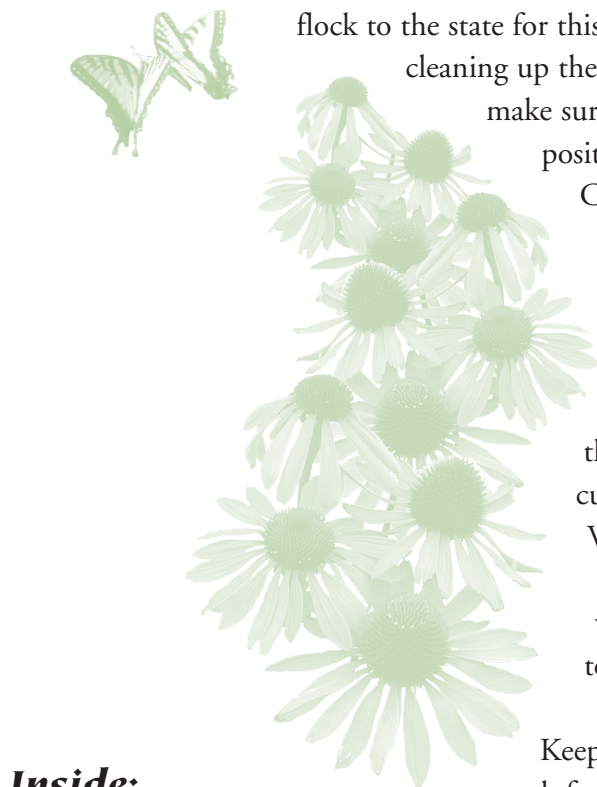
Time for Spring Cleaning

April 19 is the big day for the Annual Adopt-A-Highway Spring Clean Up. The date is chosen specifically to precede Historic Garden Week in Virginia, the oldest and largest such garden and home tour in the country. Thousands of tourists flock to the state for this annual event, and by cleaning up the highways, volunteers make sure they will leave with a positive impression of the Commonwealth.

Last year, Adopt-a-Highway volunteers worked some 50,000 hours to remove more than 75,000 bags-or 15,000 cubic yards-of trash from Virginia roadways. This volume of trash would fill Redskin Stadium to overflowing!

Keep up the good work and watch for opportunities to coordinate your pickup with other community cleanup events. If you need to order supplies or report a pickup, contact your local coordinator. Call **1-800-PRIDE VA (1-800-774-3382)** or go to *VirginiaDOT.org* and click the "Info & Services" tab.

We do appreciate your efforts!



Inside:

- ❖ Pickup Lines
- ❖ Louisiana Relatives Help Out
- ❖ Safety Guidelines
- ❖ Everything you wanted to know about ... "Litter Costs"
- ❖ Stories from the Roadside

Adopt-a-Highway Celebrates

Adopt-A-Highway celebrates 15 years in Virginia, and we'd like to acknowledge those groups who have kept our roads clean for two, five, 10 and 15 years. Two-year-old Adopt-A-Highway groups will receive certificates of appreciation automatically, and those who have been in existence for five, 10 and 15 years, and who have submitted a report within the last two years will receive certificates.

Pickup Lines

Flower Power

You may have heard that VDOT's wildflower program has been reduced. Spending for this fiscal year has been capped at \$950,000. The money allocated for the wildflower program for this fiscal year was \$1.3 million. By capping spending at \$950,000, the reduction is approximately \$400,000.

The best way for you to support roadside wildflower planting is to put some wildflowers on your license plate. Through VDOT's Operation Wildflower program more wildflower license plates sprouting on car bumpers will mean more wildflowers in highway medians and rights-of-way.

Operation Wildflower, which plants and maintains all the wildflowers you see along Virginia highways, benefits directly from the sale of the plate.

As of mid-March, nearly 1,700 plates had been sold. VDOT receives funds for every plate sold after the first 1,000. To order a plate for your car, go to the Department of Motor Vehicles Web site at www.dmvnow.com and select "Wildflower" from the Special Interest list of plates. You can also obtain the plates at your nearest DMV office.

The cost of the specialty plate is \$25 per year, \$15 of which goes to Operation Wildflower. Those funds will go for seed stock and special plantings.

Help Us Keep In Touch

If you've moved recently, please remember to let your Adopt-a-Highway coordinator know. Call 1-800-PRIDE VA, or drop a line to Adopt-a-Highway's e-mail address, at adoptahighway@VirginiaDOT.org.

Submit Reports Online

Go to the Adopt-a-Highway pages under Info & Services on the VirginiaDOT.org Web site for new information on the program, and to submit your reports online. It's easy! Just fill out the form and press submit information!

Louisiana relatives come north and help

Sandy Point Adopt-a-Highway volunteers James Allen and Daisy Howard-Douglas last summer shared their zest for the Adopt-a-Highway program with their great-nephews who were visiting from Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Here is the letter they sent:

Dear Commissioner Shucet,

My husband and I have been picking up litter since December of 1999.

We have received many wonderful compliments and support for the neatness and beauty of these roads. In July of this year, our three great nephews visited us for a week. These city nephews had never had the experience of cleaning a street and/or county road before. However, they donned bright orange vests, put on gloves, and cheerfully selected a huge orange plastic trash bag and helped to clean up the four roads. We took them to the trash disposal area also. We were so very proud of them. If it is at all possible, would you please send my great nephews service certificates? They can share these with their school, family and community. Perhaps they may start such a project in their home state. We clean our roads once a week.

Fondly,
James Allen and Daisy Howard-Douglas



Daisy Howard-Douglas and her great nephews from Louisiana clean up the roadside.

VDOT was happy to send honorary certificates to Enrico and Travis Cody and to Mateka Scott for their help. Special thanks to their great aunt and uncle as well. Their pride and commitment to the Adopt-a-Highway Program keeps Virginia beautiful!

Safety Guidelines

As Commissioner Shucet mentioned in his column, our Adopt-a-Highway volunteers are valued VDOT team members. Please use caution and exercise safe pickup practices whenever your group gets together. Review complete safety guidelines on the VirginiaDOT.org Web site at least once a year.

Before picking up, review safety tips, post "cleanup crew working" signs to alert motorists of your presence and put on your safety vests. Also, wear heavy gloves and use special caution while removing illegal signs along the roadway in case there are sharp edges, staples or nails. If you remove illegal signs attached to poles within the right-of-way, wear safety glasses and use an appropriate tool to do it safely.

Everything you wanted to know about

“Litter Costs”

(Dedicated to answering the questions on every volunteer's mind)

When we talk about the cost of litter, we often think of the money it takes to clean up our roadways (Adopt-a-Highway volunteers provide the equivalent of roughly \$2 million annually in litter-control services to the state.). We think of the miles of highways involved in the clean-up (Adopt-a-Highway roads account for 13,000 miles of highways – about one-quarter of Virginia's state maintained roads.). And we think about the manpower it takes to get the roads clean once again, and maybe of the lost revenue to the Commonwealth because of travelers who see a polluted state, and decide not to return. But how often do we think of the toll that littering takes on wildlife and the environment?

To get citizens thinking about the burden we place on the environment, the Department of Environmental Quality continues its “Litter: it just isn't natural,” campaign. The campaign focuses on the damage litter causes our fine fur and feathered friends.

Even throwing something out of the car window as seemingly harmless as biodegradable apple cores is harmful to the animal environment as such treats entice them too close to the roadside.

“The Wildlife Center of Virginia has done several ‘Critters Don't Need Litter’ presentations through educational grants from DEQ which indicate that some of the animals they treat may have been drawn into a dangerous situation because of litter,” said Stephen Coe with DEQ's Division of Environmental Enhancement. To support The Wildlife Center in its efforts to help injured animals and return creatures to the wild, mark your calendar for the 19th Annual Gala Benefit and Auction to be held Saturday, September 27, 2003 in Charlottesville. This black-tie affair is the Center's largest fundraiser.



The Wildlife Center of Virginia helps injured animals such as this bear cub.

Roadside Litter

“It's amazing what you'll find in a ditch,” mumbles the grader operator. “Leaves and branches are one thing, but when I have to haul out baby diapers, hip boots, and broken beer bottles, it makes me wonder about people.”

Most people do a pretty good job of properly disposing of refuse. Unfortunately, some people don't get the message, and their trash ends up in the roadside ditch.

Maybe they should know how long this stuff lasts. This chart shows the time required for some litter items to decompose.

Banana/Orange Peel 2-5 weeks
Cotton rag 1-5 months
Cigarette butt 1-5 years
Wool clothing 1-5 years
Plastic-coated paper 5 years
Plastic bag 10-20 years
Painted wooden stake 13 years
Plastic film container 20-30 years
Nylon fabric 30-40 years
Leather up to 50 years
Rubber boot sole 50-80 years
Aluminum can 200-500 years
Plastic 6-pack cover 450 years
Glass bottle 1 million years

Source: California Waste Management Bulletin

In the fall issue: Everything you wanted to know about ...

Virginia's Litter Control and Beautification Programs

Office of Public Affairs
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Address Service Requested

**PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID**
Richmond, VA
Permit No. 1347

the Pickup Express

Cleanup Crew Working Stories from the Roadside

Pickups that pay

Kim Salts, coordinator from the Wytheville Residency, reports that some days it pays to participate in Adopt-a-Highway. Two of her volunteer groups have found some exciting and interesting finds on recent pickups. Ray Patrick, who picks up a section of Route F043 in Wythe County, came across a \$100 bill during his pickup, and Robert and Kim Mulgrew, who clean a section of Route 652 in Wythe County, found a Pepsi bottle from 1958. Not your typical AAH finds!

Used Car lot

If you're looking for some car parts, you might try our roadways. Recently found along the side of the various roads were four auto wheel covers, one truck tire, 26 car tires (all 26 found by the Izaak Walton Park group in Charles City County), a tractor battery, a car muffler and tail light assembly, a license plate holder and an assortment of other auto parts lost during the recent snow storms.

Can you hear me now?

Dan and Helen Penn, Adopt-a-Highway volunteers in Louisa County, found two cellular telephones discarded along the side of the road. We get it. It's the true Un-Plan.

Reuse and recycle!

Did you know...

In 1999, 45% of all the paper Americans used was recovered—47.3 million tons, an all-time record.

- ❖ More paper is recovered in America for recycling than all other materials combined.
- ❖ More than one third of the raw material fiber U.S. papermakers use comes from recycled paper.

Source: Central Virginia Waste Management Authority

Modern Day Hansel and Gretel

"Your Blue Ridge Neighbors," an Adopt-a-Highway group in Botetourt County, recently found a highway cone and several packages of brown and serve rolls at intervals along the road.

Cheap Date?

Jeff and Autumn Bosch, volunteers in Chesterfield County, found a Sony Walkman CD player, a dollar bill and a bottle of Viagra.

There's gotta be a joke here

The Orange Springs Farm group in Orange County found a Heineken bottle with three dead mice and a dead fox.